

108TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION

# S. RES. 391

Designating the second week of December 2004 as “Conversations Before the Crisis Week”.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

JUNE 24, 2004

Mr. NELSON of Florida submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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## RESOLUTION

Designating the second week of December 2004 as  
“Conversations Before the Crisis Week”.

Whereas 2,400,000 people in the United States die each year;

Whereas research shows that a majority of people in the United States would prefer to die at home, surrounded by family and other loved ones, free from pain, and with their wishes honored;

Whereas only 30 percent of people in the United States living with life-limiting illness experience the interdisciplinary care that hospice provides to patients and their caregivers;

Whereas studies have shown that too many people do not get the care they want, with 70 percent dying in hospitals

and nursing homes suffering needlessly from high levels of pain due to poor pain and symptom management;

Whereas individuals need to have more information and support in order to make informed choices and share these end-of-life care wishes with their families, doctors, lawyers, and clergy;

Whereas all people in the United States have the ability to make their end-of-life care wishes clear through the execution of an advance directive, which includes a living will describing the kind of care they would like to receive and the appointment of a health care agent or proxy to speak for them if they cannot speak for themselves;

Whereas only 15 to 20 percent of people in the United States currently have an advance directive and most do not know that there are options for good pain and symptom management and quality end-of-life care, and thus do not ask for them;

Whereas honoring a dying person's preferences is a critical element of quality end-of-life care and the right of all people in the United States;

Whereas advance directive documents are valid in all 50 states and are available without charge on the Internet;

Whereas a "Conversations Before the Crisis Week", and activities planned to support this week, would encourage family members to designate time during the week to talk to their loved ones about their personal end-of-life wishes and to document those wishes formally through the completion of a living will and appointing a medical power of attorney; and

Whereas the Senate believes educating people in the United States about end-of-life care choices and encouraging

conversations about these issues before there is a medical crisis is of the utmost importance: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2               (1) designates the second week of December  
3       2004 as ‘Conversations Before the Crisis Week’; and

4               (2) requests that the President issue a procla-  
5       mation calling on the people of the United States to  
6       observe the week with appropriate ceremonies and  
7       activities.

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